AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Previously Presented) A circuit board comprising a mechanism for provably disabling the circuit board, comprising:

a key area of a substrate of the circuit board, wherein the key area comprises an identification mechanism which uniquely identifies the key area as being originally attached to the circuit board;

one or more removal features in the substrate of the circuit board aligned about the key area for breaking the substrate in a predefined boundary between the key area and the circuit board to permanently detach the key area from the circuit board, wherein the removal features include at least one of slits, slots, gaps, channels, bores, or weakened or thinned parts; and

a signal trace on the circuit board, wherein a portion of the signal trace is routed from the circuit board through the key area and back to the circuit board, wherein the signal trace conducts a signal required for a normal operation of the circuit board, and wherein the signal trace is permanently severed when the key area is detached from the circuit board.

2. (Previously Presented) The circuit board of claim 1, wherein said signal trace comprises a wire trace.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Currently Amended) The circuit board of claim 1, wherein the identification mechanism ~~a portion of the key area~~ is encapsulated ~~in a hardening material~~ to protect the identification mechanism ~~key area~~ from being easily manipulated.

8-33. (Cancelled)

34. (Currently amended) A circuit board assembly to provably disable a ~~configured for provably disabling the~~ circuit board, the assembly comprising:

a circuit board comprising a substrate which includes a specified area of the substrate that is used as a tab, wherein the tab comprises:

a proximate end connected to the circuit board;

a distal end opposite the proximate end; and

two opposing sides separated from the assembly by gaps;

an identification module situated on the tab, wherein the identification module comprises an electronic identification chip, wherein the electronic identification chip includes an identification code that uniquely identifies the tab as being originally attached to the circuit board; and

a signal conductor extending from the circuit board through the tab and back to the circuit board, wherein the signal conductor conveys ~~and configured to convey~~ a signal required for a normal operation of the circuit board when the assembly is powered;

wherein the tab is removed by breaking the substrate at or near the

proximate end; ~~in the specified area~~;

wherein removal of the tab at or near the proximate end so as to separate said identification module from the assembly causes the signal conductor on the tab to be decoupled from the signal conductor on the circuit board; and

wherein the signal conductor is permanently severed when the tab is detached from the circuit board.

35. (Previously presented) The circuit board assembly of claim 34, wherein the circuit board assembly cannot be powered if the signal conductor on the tab is decoupled from the signal conductor on the circuit board.

36. (Previously presented) The circuit board assembly of claim 34, wherein the circuit board becomes at least partially non-functional when the signal conductor on the tab is decoupled from the signal conductor on the circuit board.

37. (Currently Amended) The circuit board assembly of claim 34, wherein the identification module further comprises a hologram.

38. (Previously Presented) The circuit board assembly of claim 34, wherein the identification module further comprises a barcode.

39. (Previously Presented) The circuit board assembly of claim 34, wherein the identification module further comprises a sequence of characters.

40. (Cancelled)

41. (Previously Presented) The circuit board assembly of claim 34, further comprising an integrated circuit on the circuit board, wherein the

integrated circuit disables at least some operations of the circuit board if the tab is decoupled from the signal conductor.

42. (Previously Presented) The circuit board assembly of claim 34, wherein the signal conductor does not extend to the distal end of the tab.

43. (Currently amended) A circuit board assembly comprising:

a substrate which includes:

a specified area of the substrate that is used as a key; and

a signal conductor which conducts a signal required for a normal operation of the circuit board, and wherein a portion of the signal conductor is routed from the circuit board through the key and back to the circuit board;

wherein the key comprises an identification module, wherein the identification module includes one of a barcode, a hologram, an etched identification string, or an electronic identification chip that uniquely identifies the key as being originally attached to the circuit board;

wherein the key is removed by breaking the substrate ~~in~~ at a boundary of the specified ~~area;~~area,

wherein while said key is removably connected to the circuit board assembly a plurality of slits, slots, gaps, channels, bores, or weakened or thinned parts that are defined between the circuit board assembly and said key;

wherein removal of the key from the circuit board assembly causes said portion of the signal conductor on the key to be decoupled from the signal conductor on the circuit board assembly; and

wherein the signal conductor is permanently severed when the key is detached from the circuit board.

44. (Currently amended) A circuit board comprising:

a substrate which includes a specified area of the substrate that is used as a key, wherein the key is removably connected to the circuit board, and wherein the key comprises:

a portion of a signal conductor ~~configured~~ to conduct a signal between the key and the circuit board, wherein the signal is required for a normal operation of the circuit board, and wherein the signal conductor is routed from the circuit board through the key and back to the circuit board; and

an identification module comprising an electronic identification chip, wherein the electronic identification chip includes an identification code that uniquely identifies the key as being originally attached to the circuit board;

wherein the key is removed by breaking the substrate in a portion of the specified area, wherein the portion of the specified area is connected to a first portion of the circuit board;~~area;~~

wherein the key is removably connected to the first portion ~~a first portion~~ of the circuit board but is separated from other portions of the circuit board by one or more removal features, wherein the removal features include at least one of slits, slots, gaps, channels, bores, or weakened or thinned parts;

wherein the removal features facilitate detachment of the key from the circuit board; and wherein the signal conductor is permanently severed when the key is removed from the circuit board.

45. (Previously Presented) The circuit board assembly of claim 43,

wherein an integrated circuit on the circuit board detects the absence of the key when the key is removed; and

wherein the integrated circuit disables at least some operations of the circuit board if the key is removed.

46. (Previously Presented) The circuit board assembly of claim 43, wherein the electronic identification chip includes an identification code that uniquely identifies the key.

47. (Previously Presented) The circuit board of claim 44, wherein the identification code can only be read from the electronic identification chip after the key is detached from the circuit board.

48. (Previously Presented) The circuit board of claim 44, wherein an integrated circuit on the circuit board disables at least some operations of the circuit board if the key is detached from the circuit board.

49. (Previously Presented) The circuit board of claim 1, wherein the identification mechanism includes one of a barcode, a hologram, an etched identification string, or an electronic identification chip.

50. (Previously Presented) The circuit board of claim 49, wherein the electronic identification chip includes an identification code that uniquely identifies the key area as being originally attached to the circuit board.

51. (Previously Presented) The circuit board of claim 50, wherein the identification code can only be read from the electronic identification chip after the key is detached from the circuit board.

52. (Previously Presented) The circuit board of claim 1, comprising an integrated circuit which detects the absence of the key when the key is detached from the circuit board.

53. (Previously Presented) The circuit board of claim 52, wherein the integrated circuit tests if the signal trace is intact and disables at least some

operations of the circuit board if the key area has been detached from the circuit board.

54. (Previously Presented) The circuit board of claim 1, wherein said signal trace comprises an optical trace.